EVIL

IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY

Edited by Bruce Haddock,
Peri Roberts and Peter Sutch

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Edinburgh University Press

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Edinburgh University Press Ltd
22 George Square, Edinburgh
www.euppublishing.com

Typeset in 11/13 Palatino Light by
Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire, and
printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 0 7486 4196 3 (hardback)

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Chapter 2 originally from: John Milbank, *Being Reconciled* © 2003, Routledge. Reproduced by permission of Taylor and Francis Books UK.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Bruce Haddock, Peri Roberts and Peter Sutch

The concept of 'evil' has a long history in the western tradition, extending from early theological debate, through tortured discussion of the relationship between moral and religious issues, to a contemporary context in which moral and political theory have domains of discourse in their own right. The religious roots of the idea of 'evil', however, have often made it difficult to accommodate in predominantly secular cultures, especially in multicultural contexts where deeply held beliefs may not be widely shared. Indeed, there has been a tendency in recent decades, especially among political theorists, to set the notion aside as outdated or inappropriate. Yet, at an intuitive level, the idea that some things are especially wrong, beyond toleration, still has significant currency. 'Evil' is undoubtedly a complex and controversial notion, but it continues to capture something that resonates across cultures in the modern world. We can grant that 'evil' is a dangerous and loaded term, readily open to abuse. The simple fact that it remains in currency in so many areas of discourse demands philosophical attention. While there is a small (but growing) philosophical literature on evil, political theory has not revisited the idea systematically.[1]

It is clear that 'evil' as a concept is taken seriously in ordinary political debate. Politicians and the press recognise the power of describing something as evil. This is clear in accounts of 'evil regimes', an 'axis of evil', of evil people such as Josef Fritzl and other abusers of children. While different people or regimes may not always agree about the precise character of evil, there is little doubt in their minds that something is evil, that the concept labels something important. The label is reserved for institutions, people or behaviours that are not simply wrong, but appear to be especially horrible, or so bad that they warrant another moral category altogether.

In contrast, contemporary political theory has found little use for the concept of evil. Liberals have often been suspicious of its religious pedigree, not wanting to import a moral category that undermines claims to impartiality. Critics of liberalism have generally been equally wary of evil, uncertain about the status of the moral judgement it conveys. Indeed, communitarianism, multiculturalism and social constructivist positions more broadly have often attacked the possibility of objective or universal moral judgements that seem to characterise attributions of evil altogether, regarding judgements about right and wrong in contextual or interpretative terms. Rather than condemning practices on partial grounds, the claim is that we should recognise 'difference' and embrace a pluralist politics. In doing so it will become clear that what appears to be evil from one perspective may be much more ambiguous from another.

More recently, many political theorists have expressed a concern that some things may not be simply 'different', but wrong. Approaching the issue in very different ways, theorists argue that there are important questions to be asked about the extent of a reasonable pluralism. It is this concern that we address, focusing on the limits of politics from the nasty end. It is here, at the boundaries of politics where our tolerance is stretched to breaking point, that the concept of evil may prove useful. Where the term amounts to more than a rhetorical device, the ordinary use of evil points to the importance of a boundary to acceptable politics. There turns out to be surprising agreement in modern cultures on the substantive evils that confront human communities (genocide, torture, slavery in its various guises), but much less consensus about the criteria being invoked when these (apparently confident) judgements are made. This book explores the actual and possible roles of evil in contemporary political theory. It turns out that whether in outlining criteria for the limits of toleration, in understanding the development of humanitarian international law, in theorising post-conflict situations, or in making sense of political rhetoric, that the notion of evil has an important contribution to make.

Our substantive chapters begin (John Milbank, 'Darkness and Silence: Evil and the Western Legacy') with a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between religious and secular accounts of value. Milbank challenges the basic assumption that conceptions of value can be effectively articulated within the terms of reference of secular discourse. Secular rationality can manage instrumental (and especially pair-wise)

comparisons of value very effectively. Treatments of absolute value are quite another matter. Milbank contrasts the richness of theological discussions of evil with the paucity of effective accounts in the secular tradition. Even Kant, whose sensitivity to the concept of evil is unusual in the liberal tradition, and whose moral philosophy defends a conception of absolute value, finds himself, in political terms, dependent on a sovereign state as an enforcer of political and legal order, ultimately linking freedom and autonomy among individuals to the arbitrary exercise of power. In Milbank's analysis, the fate of liberalism, even in the hands of its best exponents, highlights the failure of a secular theory of value. If we cannot do without the term 'evil' in our ordinary discourse, the implication is that we have to look beyond secular (largely instrumental) rationality for a grasp of the importance of human life.

This is a challenge to normative political theory at the most basic level. Temperamentally wary of the tone of strident moral condemnation implicit in casual use of the term 'evil', political theorists have generally exercised discretion, avoiding the loose use of language of tabloid journalists and the less cautious political speech writers. Widespread acknowledgement of the reasonableness of pluralism has contributed to this wariness. Human flourishing is understood to come in many different forms and the values these forms embody are, in some important sense, contingent. Peri Roberts ('Constructivism and Evil') argues, however, that a notion of evil represents a necessary limiting conception for a defensible politics. Much of contemporary liberal theory is constructivist in a way that is usually taken to rule out categorical moral judgements that draw on notions of objective good and evil. Roberts, in contrast, explores the role that a properly developed conception of evil can play in liberal constructivism. Firstly, theories of evil are an important basis for a cross-cultural understanding of wrongness that can be framed in a liberal manner. Secondly, the content of theories of evil appears much less partial than ideas of the good that predominate in liberal discussion. Liberal constructivism, often castigated for offering an inadequate understanding of human goods, is thus well placed to outline a sparser notion of human evil that can anchor discussions of value.

Contingency remains a problem for any secular (and especially liberal) theory of value. Bruce Haddock ('Systemic Evil and the Limits of Pluralism') confronts this issue directly. Pluralism is a fact of life for us. We have accepted that communities can flourish in a remarkable

variety of ways. But it does not follow that human beings can flourish in any and every context. Human beings are creatures who do things, not creatures to whom things simply happen. They are agents engaged in complex patterns of interaction. Initiating activities, however, presupposes at least minimal conditions. Individuals will have to be recognised in consistent ways. They need to be able to predict how others will respond to them, at least in rough-and-ready terms. These are institutional presuppositions of agency that cannot be taken for granted. The project, for Haddock, is to understand the necessary institutional conditions for human flourishing and, more significantly, to identify conditions in which those conditions are willfully denied. The key is a conception of systemic evil that Haddock argues can be developed as a radical revision of the natural law tradition, which identifies an evil regime with a legal order that systematically denies people the opportunity to plan and lead fulfilling lives.

Fulfilling lives are led in co-operation with others. Kerstin Budde ('Unreasonable or Evil?') explores the implications of a denial of a capacity to co-operate. Budde accepts the link between reasonableness and justice, and focuses on the ramifications of unreasonableness in social worlds that must necessarily be co-operative, however specific terms of co-operation might be worked out in particular contexts. Rawls saw his own work as a defence of a realistic Utopia that held out at least the prospect of the eradication of many of the great evils that disfigure human life. He specifically links political and social evils (injustice in the broadest sense) with unreasonableness. Budde accepts that this is a problematic move. We can easily grant that evil is (among very many other things) unreasonable, but no one would contend that unreasonableness should always be equated with evil. Unreasonableness, however, always undermines basic reciprocity between human beings. Sometimes this will be little more than a trivial irritation. In other contexts much more is at stake. We may feel outrage at the denial of fully human status to a fellow human being. The fact that unreasonableness offers us a spectrum of positions, with evil at one extreme, actually highlights the seriousness of ordinary engagements in which free and equal status is denied.

Budde has exposed genuine tensions in Rawls's work. In a wider theoretical context, it may be that attachment to theoretical system is part of the problem. Peter Sutch ('Evil in Contemporary International Political Theory: Acts that Shock the Conscience of Mankind') rejects

the systematic approach to theorising evil from cosmopolitan first principles. He argues, instead, that if we are looking for an international conception of evil, we should engage in an exposition of the idea of 'acts that shock the conscience of mankind', drawing on the rich material available in international law. This is a public repository of genuine concern, encompassing both moral reflection and clear recognition of the practical limits of state action in a complex world. When we attend to the history of this developing notion closely, according to Sutch, what we find is not the codification of a shared cosmopolitan account of evil but rather a critique of sovereign state power. In this view, the international community of states (loosely specified) has already gone beyond the standard assumptions of old-style realist theory. States can collectively respond to humanitarian catastrophe and crisis. When they do so, they create new norms and expectations which involve deep commitments that, by slow degrees, change the terms of reference of international relations.

Evil has always been a central issue in just-war theory. Mark Evans ('Doing Evil Justly? The Morality of Justifiable Abomination') argues, however, that just-war theory has been so preoccupied with justice in the declaration and conduct of war that it has neglected the implications of recognising that even just warriors unavoidably do evil. If just war is often characterised as the lesser of two evils, it is still an evil, and one that must be confronted as a tough consequence of morality in a non-ideal world. This focuses attention on the neglected notion of *jus post bellum*, justice in the ending and aftermath of war. *Jus post bellum*, Evans argues, obliges just warriors to set just terms for peace, recognise their responsibility for a fair share of the burdens of war, and to take a full part in processes of forgiveness and reconciliation. Even the most just war involves the wilful infliction of moral evils. Innocents and combatants alike are killed, and long-term consequences are not easily assessed. In a literal sense, once we embark on war, we know not what we do. Focus on the inescapable evil of war is a salutary reminder of an overwhelming burden of responsibility.

The language of evil is not easily accommodated across the conventional political spectrum. Groups on the Left, in particular, have often resisted the term, not least because they are often focused on the contingent (often economic) constraints on ordinary lives. Eve Garrard ('Evil and the Left') urges a reassessment in the light of the very real evils that blight lives. The fact that people's lives may not go

well, for no fault of their own, is a matter of serious concern. To hold back from judgement, however, is especially worrying for anyone who positions themselves on the Left. We take a particular stance precisely because we want to remedy identifiable abuses. Garrard acknowledges that the term 'evil' is easily abused, readily and almost unthinkingly from some perspectives on the political spectrum. Yet real abuses remain to be addressed. Where they are serious and knowingly inflicted, it may be appropriate to use the term 'evil' to describe them. When that is the case, left-inclined reservations should be set aside. It is much harder to confront abuses if we fail to describe them adequately.

Thus far in this volume, the obvious wrongness of evil has not been questioned. In secular cultures, however, the absolute values that once warranted sweeping moral condemnation are not readily available as a shared public resource. Feelings may be strong, but arguments vastly different, pointing to cultural and moral worlds that may be barely intelligible from particular perspectives. It would be very odd in the modern world not to be aware that one's deepest convictions might be reprehensible from someone else's point of view. John Horton ('The Glamour of Evil: Dostoyevsky and the Politics of Transgression') confronts the ambiguity of judgement directly. Far from repelling us, evil might even have its own shocking allure for us. We read books and watch films that bombard our senses with atrocities. But even in conventional institutional contexts, the perverse attraction of evil might be very vivid. The Easter service of the Roman Catholic Church asks congregations 'do you reject the glamour of evil?' What this glamour might involve needs to be unpacked, suggesting images of temptation, fascination, and the spell of evil as an illusionary good. We might declare (almost wallow in) our weakness. Horton highlights an undeniable fascination with the excitement and vitality of the transgressive, the rule-breaker, as recognised by Nietzsche, Freud and their followers. He explores whether it is possible to give a theoretical account of the 'illusion' that evil can ever be in our interest. The alternative is to recognise that the fascination with evil not only has deep cultural and psychological roots but may also throw into question the wrongness and undesirability of evil. From where we stand, these are difficult judgements to make. Philosophy may be too neat and tidy to help us very much. Horton draws on Dostoyevsky's analysis of character and motivation to highlight what are, in fact, everyday psychological perils. In the end,

our ordinariness may be our strongest resource. Good, no less than evil, might be irredeemably banal.

Undermining the distinctiveness of evil is a characteristic of political, as well as cultural, discourse. Ordinarily judgements of evil are a tool of political condemnation. As such they take their place alongside judgements of wrongdoing of varying degrees, from forgivable lapses to wrongful acts justified by necessity to criminal wrongdoing. But one feature of political rhetoric is that distinctions between degrees of wrongdoing are often undermined by claims of 'moral equivalence' that aim to blunt, revise and unsettle them. Richard Shorten ('The Rhetoric of Moral Equivalence') is concerned to sort through exactly what is going on when public speech about wrongdoing is treated as a distinctive kind of political action, to examine moral equivalence as a feature of *persuasive* political language. His aim is to understand the conditions that inform the allocation, weighting and distribution of properties that convey wrongdoing in a political, rather than a strictly philosophical, context.

A clear presence throughout this volume is Hannah Arendt's controversial characterisation of evil as banal. Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* has always divided critics, and for a time dominated discussion of her wider work.[2] In retrospect it is still surprising that a report on a trial, with no pretension to offering a theory of evil, should remain an indispensable point of reference for theoretical discussion. David Boucher ('Banal but not Benign: Arendt on Evil') fittingly concludes our volume with a full account of the text and its reception. Arendt did not intend to belittle the horrific evil of the holocaust, but her account of evil-doing still has an unnerving quality. Boucher focuses on the banality of the evildoer, Eichmann himself, just getting on with his job. What emerges is a picture of an ordinary man who simply went about his daily tasks, seemingly barely aware of what he was actually doing. And, of course, behind the figure of Eichmann we can imagine a host of ordinary folk, attending to their banal tasks, which just happened to contribute to the slaughter of human beings on an industrial scale.

This is unnerving enough. Behind Arendt's account, however, is a darker story of the status of human beings as vulnerable rights-bearers, dependent on political protection if they are to enjoy any rights at all. Boucher highlights dark implications of what a 'right to have rights' (Arendt's phrase) might commit us to, given that we are essentially

rightless outside political orders. We must ask ourselves (and Arendt) what qualifies us to be right-holders. Boucher shows that Arendt's own attitude privileged the fortunate citizens of established polities, leaving inhabitants of the underdeveloped world almost defenceless. He stresses a residual racism in Arendt's thought that must make modern citizens deeply uncomfortable. More important still, he leaves us with the worrying thought that all our judgements are made from partial positions.

The early chapters of this book emphasise possibilities for the systematic theorising of evil in contemporary political and international theory. Steps are made to carve out a continuing role for the notion of evil. Indeed, it may be that something like a concept of evil can do vital work in enabling us to be clearer about the limits of a legitimate politics. Later chapters focus attention on the way evil presents itself up close, in complicated political situations of war, for example, and to politicians in the process of political condemnation. What becomes clear, whether from the point of view of the perpetrators of necessary evil, of the victims of evil, or of political actors making judgements about evil, is that it demands understanding. Political theory should not sidestep such a demand but rather explore ways of meeting it.

Evil is a fundamentally cross-disciplinary concept. It would not be appropriate, given the range of the literature, to advance anything like a definitive theory of evil. It is clear, however, in political theory, ethics, history and cultural studies more broadly, that the assumptions we unthinkingly employ in everyday normative judgement demand closer scrutiny in light of our experience of the terrible things that are done to people. This book is part of a general move in contemporary theory to explore the grounds of the judgements we seem driven to make, especially in the context of deeply divided societies.[3] Whether we need to insist on the universal status of judgements in order to negotiate this difficult terrain is, of course, open to question. At the very least, however, doing political theory effectively involves coming to grips with the range of ordinary experience. The term 'evil' continues to convey something that is all too real in many lives. Our suggestion here, from our different perspectives, is that focus on 'evil' obliges us to address fundamental issues in normative judgement. This is unavoidably controversial work. Our hope is that analysis of extreme issues generates conceptual clarity.

Notes

1 See Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Richard Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); Richard Bernstein, *The Abuse of Evil* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); Phillip Cole, *The Myth of Evil* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); and Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

2 See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).

3 See Anne Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (London: Allen Lane, 2006); Bruce Haddock and Peter Sutch, eds, *Multiculturalism, Identity and Rights* (London: Routledge, 2003); and Bruce Haddock, Peri Roberts and Peter Sutch, eds, *Principles and Political Order: The Challenge of Diversity* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Chapter 2

DARKNESS AND SILENCE: EVIL AND THE WESTERN LEGACY

John Milbank

A

Traditionally, in Greek, Christian and Jewish thought, evil has been denied any positive foothold in being. It has not been seen as a real force, or quality, but as the absence of force and quality, and as the privation of being itself. It has not been regarded as glamorous, but as sterile; never as more, always as less. For many recent philosophers, however (for example, Jacob Rogozinski, Slavoj Zizek, J.-L. Nancy) this view appears inadequate in the face of what they consider to be the unprecedented evil of the twentieth century: the mass organisation of totalitarian control and terror, systematic genocide, and the enslavement of people who are deliberately worked to the point of enfeeblement and then slaughtered.[1] Such evil, they argue, cannot be regarded as privative, because this view claims that evil arises only from the deliberate pursuit of a lesser good. Power directed towards extermination, however, suggests destruction and annihilation pursued perversely for its own sake, as an alternative end in itself. Such a motive towards the pure negation of being, as towards the cold infliction of suffering – that may not even be enjoyed by its perpetrators – suggests that the will to destroy is a positive and surd attribute of being itself and no mere inhibition of being in its plenitude.

This supposed positive evil for its own sake is often dubbed 'radical evil' following a term used by Immanuel Kant in his book *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.[2] With some plausibility, Kant's account of evil is seen as encouraging a break with the traditional privation view focused upon being in general in favour of a view focused purely upon the finite human will. This new view comprehends evil as a positively willed denial of the good and so as a pure act of perversity

without ground. The development of such a position is traced from Kant, through Schelling, to Heidegger.

In this way, a specifically modern *theory* of evil is held to be adequate to account for a specifically modern extremism of evil *practice* – which the theory, nonetheless, predates. Despite this predating – which might suggest some causal link – the modern practical extremity of evil is held to be, at least in part, the outcome of a far older western tradition of metaphysical reflection on evil which trivialises it and underrates it. So not only is evil as privation refuted by Auschwitz, it is also indicted by it as responsible for such an outcome. Evil denied as mere denial leaves us unvigilant against its real positivity.

This position, then, traces no lineage to the Holocaust from the specifically German and modern accounts of radical evil, yet asserts, perhaps all too vaguely, a lineage from the age-old western metaphysical understanding of evil as privation. Here, however, the advocates of 'radical evil' (or 'postmodern Kantians' as I will henceforth describe them) have to face the diametrically opposite alignment of theoretical and practical evil proposed by Heidegger's pupil, Hannah Arendt – and arguably against her former teacher.[3] For Arendt, famously, the mass murderer Albert Eichmann, on trial in Jerusalem, discloses not a pre-satanic will to evil, nor a lust for horror, but instead 'the banality of evil', an incremental and pathetic inadequacy of motive which escalated imperceptibility into complicity with unimaginable wickedness. It has now been shown, against those (for various reasons) prone to doubt this, that Arendt's account of evil as 'banal' is most certainly linked with her Augustinian predilections, and support for Augustine's account of evil as negative.[4] Thus the horror of Auschwitz, for Arendt, is not the revelation of evil perpetrated for its own sake, but rather a demonstration that even the most seemingly absolute evil tends to be carried out by people who imagine, albeit reluctantly, that they are fulfilling the goods of order, obedience, political stability and social peace.

In this fashion, Arendt implicitly sees the western metaphysical account of evil as privation as confirmed, not denied, by the Holocaust. A fortiori, therefore, this traditional theory of evil is not for her complicit with the modern practical excess of evil. In addition, Arendt established very astutely certain links between a debased Kantianism, and the co-operation of many of the German people with the implementing of the final solution.[5] To this degree she also raised the question of a link between the modern theory of evil and the modern excessive practice

of evil. And where she did, in her political theory, deploy Kant favourably, she adverted to social convergence in judgement, which is linked, by Kant, with the beautiful, and not to the common experience of the natural sublime, that for Kant, has profoundly to do both with respect for the formal law, *and* with radical evil.[6]

Despite this opening of the issue concerning the relation between modern theory of evil and modern evil as practised, Arendt veered well away from any indictment of Kant as such. *Debased* Kantianism is culpable, not the real Kantian philosophical legacy. Thus, while in relation to the Holocaust, the ancient view of evil is confirmed and therefore exonerated, the modern, positive view of evil is not accused of a certain responsibility. And yet this intellectual lineage would seem to be, at least prima facie, more plausible in terms of time locality and proximity than the supposed genealogy which traces back to western metaphysical ontotheology. It would also allow some significance to the pre-dating of the modern practice of evil by the modern theory of evil. After all, the opponents of the privation theory have already contended for the profound alignment of radical evil with the Holocaust, since this theory alone is held adequately to interpret it. Supposing, instead, that *privation theory* can interpret the Holocaust, then this alignment would appear very differently: not as the retrospective match of event to detached theory, but as the prior perverse attempt to enact a false theory. Instead of the view that the negation of evil that fantasises its mere negativity permits its positivity to erupt, one would have the view that the false assertion of evil as positive leads to an impossible quest to enact such positivity, which can in reality only unleash a bad infinite of further and further privation, since *being* will not permit any final solution, any finished or perfected evil.

One can see immediately, from this formulation, however, why Arendt could not have traced the genealogy it expresses, quite apart from her residual respect for Kant. To ascribe causality to the pursuit of the satanic illusion, the illusion of the pursuit of evil for its own sake, appears clean contrary to the invocation of the banality of evil behaviour. And Arendt, as many have pointed out, had all too little to say about the psychology of the *instigators* of the final solution rather than those of people who must be judged its mere executives, albeit paramount ones, like Eichmann. All the same, this is not to say that a privation theory, nor even aspects of a banality theory, cannot apply also to the instigators. Hitler and his henchmen were not exactly satanists and

their articulations of their motives were not like that of the Californian Charles Manson or the 'Moors murderer' Ian Brady, a close student of de Sade and decadent literature. In these extreme cases one has something like the illusion of the belief that evil is being performed for its own sake – although privation theory is able to discern amid this vaunted satanic glory the pathetic desire for control, of those whose high self-esteem has been in no way socially confirmed.[7] Something of that may, indeed, have been operative among the Nazi cohorts, but they still articulated their defective desires more positively, in terms of promotion of the racial health and excellence of humanity: indeed, in their paganism or atheism they remained all too humanist, and Hitler sought avowedly to produce a human being worthy of worship.[8] Likewise, the suppression and finally liquidation of the Jews were not articulated in nihilistic terms, but could be viewed as 'rational' given that one's objective was to secure a German power absolutely untainted by socialism and the influence of international commerce, and a German identity based on cultural uniformity and demotion of the Christian and biblical legacy in favour of a Nordic one.

The Nazis did not, therefore, like Charles Manson, avowedly elect radical evil, saying 'Be Thou my Good'. Such satanism discovers itself to be an illusion at the point where it finds it can establish no stable positive kingdom of evil, nor encompass absolute destruction of being, but instead can only unleash an ever-escalating slide of deprivation which will usually cease with self-destruction. Clearly, the theory of radical evil is not implicated in the Holocaust in this extreme satanic fashion. In a much more subtle fashion, however, it may after all, be implicated. Here one can claim first of all (as I will later demonstrate) that Nazi concepts of universal power and legality were much more compatible with, and even derived from, the Kantian categorical imperative, than Arendt allowed. In the second place, one can claim that, if the Nazis still affirmed a Kantian free will as their good, then they also intended the aporias of this free will, as half admitted by Kant in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. For these aporias, there is no clear way of distinguishing between the will which genuinely wills freedom, and the will which wills against itself, restraining freedom – this self-opposition for Kant characterises the evil will.[9] As we shall see, these aporias arise because of the lack, in Kant, at this highest level, of any teleology which can discriminate the good substance of what is willed, from a deficient instance of such substance. Here, instead, the only thing willed

is the law of free willing itself, which defines legality as untrammelled autonomy – and it might seem that the free will to bind oneself equally instantiates such autonomy. At the very least one can ask, exactly how is one to discriminate between the will binding itself to be free, and the will binding itself in unfreedom, if there is no desirable content here to prove the goodness of the genuine good will to freedom?

But if this is really the case with Kant, then one must face up to something which seems at first sight highly unlikely: namely that political totalitarianism and terror really could, with a certain plausibility, pose as the fulfilling of the categorical imperative, just as much as the most stringent code of personal self-denial. Later we shall see how these opposites can indeed converge and mutually reinforce each other. In effect, the promotion of formal freedom can become akin to the systematic promotion of the inhibition of freedom by an imperceptible slide. And such self-deceiving espousal of evil would be in practice very like the setting up of a satanic organisation. Here also, no stable realm of evil would result but, instead, the pace of privation of being would be horrendously quickened.

In what follows I shall offer, in the first place, a further defence and exposition of the view of evil as privation and banality. I shall therefore argue that it can apply also to modern extreme evil, and is in no sense responsible for this evil. In the second place, beyond Arendt, however, I shall argue that the modern, positive theory of evil *is* in a measure responsible for the modern actuality of evil.

B

To begin with, however, I must offer a much fuller exposition of the modern theory of evil as positive and 'radical'.

Contemporary proponents of this view start with the proposition that totalitarian phenomena of the previous century, and in particular the Holocaust, exhibit something uniquely evil. And this is, indeed, more than arguable. For in these instances, not just executive forces became poisoned but sovereign law itself consented to criminal principles and dedicated systemically the resources of the state to mass murder on a legal, organised and bureaucratic basis. In particular, sections of the population deemed difficult or surplus to requirement were not simply oppressed or incarcerated; they were literally worked to death and discarded. So, whereas previous slave economies still preserved some

sense of the human status of the slaves, here this was denied in the context of a new hierarchical humanism which restricted full humanity to certain racial, physical and mental ideals.[10]

For the postmodern Kantians, this new degree of malevolence suggests in effect a will towards evil for its own sake – not merely evil as a lack of reality, or a lack of power, but evil as an alternative and viable exercise of power, whereby some human beings can devote themselves primarily to the destruction of others. This is now revealed as a possibility: it worked; scarcely any Jews now inhabit Germany. And if evil is not revealed as having equal potency with the good – an equal potency which proceeds to an equal actuality – then it is also shown as proceeding entirely from the rational will. It would be, surely, unthinkable to proffer any excuses for the Holocaust, or to lay out a set of mitigating circumstances. Yet the postmodern Kantians suggest that privation theory proceeds precisely by offering mitigating circumstances for all evil, so allowing radical evil to slip through its theoretical net. What it amounts to, they argue, is a kind of justification of being, an ontodicy (by analogy with theodicy), which also exonerates all creatures who exist, including human beings. For privation theory, all being as being is good, and because all power in order to be effective manifests the actuality of being, all power, as power, is good, and evil not only is impotent but can even be defined, at least, in one valid way, as weakness and impotence (this is underscored most heavily by Dionysus the Areopagite).[11] It follows that, since the will is a potency, it is only actual and effective when it wills the good – hence for both Dionysus and Augustine, it is not exactly the case that evil can be willed; rather there is evil precisely to the degree that there is an absence of willing. No one, as willing, wills anything but the good, and evil affects the will only to the extent that a deficient good is being willed.[12]

This exoneration of the will as such, suggests, to the postmodern Kantians, that thereby the will is excused, and evil displaced from human origin. Instead of a primary referral of evil to potency and will, in terms of a kind of immanentised Manicheaism, privation theory seems to imply a root of evil prior to power and will, in impersonal ontological circumstances, or rather in neontological circumstances.[13] For, according to Jewish and Christian tradition, at least up to Maimonides and Aquinas, being in its pure self-origination is infinite, and if being as such is good, then, also, the infinite as such is good, indefeasibly good, beyond the possibility of swerving. Hence it would seem that goodness

is a property of non-limitation, and not a derivative of personal election. Conversely, if evil is possible only for finite creatures, the finititude can always be proffered as something of an excuse: the will falls into evil by choosing the lesser good (since to will at all it must will *some* good) but here it is a victim of its finite partiality of perspective, and its finite lack of power to affirm. Indeed, even St Paul appears entirely to exonerate the will, lamenting that he does what he hates, the opposite of what he wants to do (Romans 7: 15, 18; Gal. 5: 17). Thereby he blames the incapacity of his flesh but not exactly the purity of his intentions. For where the will has failed to will what it should, then, for this traditional metaphysical perspective, it has failed to will in some measure, and the will is held captive by something prior to will: either, for the ancient Greeks, materiality as such; or else for Jews and Christian, certain perverse habits that hold our materiality and psychic passions in their grip.[14] Thus, while it might seem that privation theory, by defining evil as lack of being, prevents any rooting of evil in the ontological, in fact it does affirm such rooting. For, because evil is here tied to finititude, and the finite is caused by the infinite, the infinite is the real ultimate source of lack – the ontological of the neontological. And, because the infinite is essentially impersonal, freedom as the origin of evil is here subordinated to ontological *cause* as the origin of evil. In this way, it is argued by the postmodern Kantians, human evil is mystified, and blame shifted to a metaphysical scenario. Yet at the same time, their apparently more humanist account involves also an *alternative* metaphysical scenario. They wish to regard the alternative good/evil in preontological terms as entirely prior to the distinction between infinite and finite. This means, for them, that the finite will as such, in willing the good of the other, can manifest the extreme of goodness – an infinite good, if you like.[15] But conversely, as they concede, following Schelling, this must also mean that the infinite can manifest the extreme of evil.[16] Thus for Schelling, the good will of God is the result of a radical decision within the dark indifferent ground of the infinite – and this alone ensures that God *really* is good, according to any fashion of goodness that we can understand. God's goodness also is a loving decision; it is an offer, a free gift, not an inevitability. Were it the latter, how could we be grateful, how could we feel infinitely loved? (Schelling has a certain point here, even though I shall later dissent.)

C

In articulating their post-Holocaust alternative to privation theory, the postmodern Kantians draw primarily upon Kant's account of radical evil, which they see as explicitly or implicitly developed by Schelling and Heidegger.

In Kant's account, evil is not really referred to finititude and so not primarily to any sort of lack or deficiency. He produces instead a theory of the pure 'self-binding' of the will, which is sometimes seen as his qualification of the enlightenment and retrieval, or even purer expression of, a biblical, Pauline and Augustinian thematic.[17] But this is a mistake; radical evil is *not* original sin (even though Kant sees it as the rational rethinking of the latter) and it *is* an enlightenment substitute for original sin, in a fashion that I shall demonstrate. First of all, one should recall my invocation of St Paul. In his understanding of will, he still assumes a biblical and Hellenic teleology: human beings are created to will the love of God as their final end and beatitude. As created they have a certain foretaste of the vision of God, and sufficient power to pursue this vision as they ought. When the will does pursue this vision, it is free from perverse, unnatural restrictions of its appointed nature, which thereby inhibits its freedom as such – for the inner reality of creaturely freedom is just this passing beyond given finite nature in diverse ways towards the infinite. Will is nothing other, as Augustine makes clear in *De Libero Arbitrio*, than the site of the *dynamism,* of the participation of the finite in the infinite, in the case of rational creatures (angels and humans).[18] Thus 'will' arises where an as-not-yet-fully accessible rational vision lures forward through our desire, our finite potency. It follows that will as such cannot fail of the choice of its final end without in some measure slipping away from its freedom. And this slipping away *cannot* – either for St Paul or Augustine – be accomplished by a surd choice of will alone, since will is nothing but the impact of infinite reason upon finite power. Instead, the slipping must involve either or both an unnatural restriction of intellectual reason and of forceful capacity. St Paul dwells upon the latter, Augustine on both: for Augustine we cannot will what we will to will, because the inherited sin of Adam has impaired both our vision and our potency. If there was any pure 'sin of the will' (unknown to the Greeks) then this was the original sin of Adam himself, who, enjoying perfect vision and perfect capacity and so perfect freedom, nonetheless freely

and without ground willed these things away.[19] This act, for Augustine, is strictly baffling and incomprehensible. It is not at all *explained* by free will, because free will in its natural created state knows only the willing of the good, under the compulsion of the vision of the good, and no choice between good and evil at all. To the contrary, the very (as it were) 'fictional' notion, that there is such a choice, was invented by Adam at the Fall (or by Satan in the Angelic Fall). The problem of the Fall is the sheer apparent impossibility of this invention – the imagining of a false simulacrum within the repleteness of reality. This imagining alone erects an illusory autonomy, or self-governance of the will, since it is precisely the will of a creature to hold sway over itself, in disregard of its appointed substantive end. That is to say, it is the will to prefer the identical repetition of emptiness of rule for no purpose, but rather for its own sake, over submission to the natural superiority of the infinite which must be perceived in ever-renewed, non-identical repetition. Indeed, finitude alone renders this delusion possible –yet finitude here is not really, as critics of privation theory imagine, invoked as an excuse – since the entire life of the finite, as created out of nothing, resides in its orientation to the infinite. Thus to assert the pure self-governing of the finite entity, over against the infinite – which, as boundless, *cannot* be self-governing in this fashion – is also to deny what sustains its bounds and specific substance, in favour of an emptiness (an *infinite* emptiness) which alone belongs to it solely.

Since Adam's choice was for the illusion of a finite autonomy of the will (that is to say, for the idea of a groundless free choice between good and evil as expressing the very essence of freedom) it is not at all true to say that, for Christian theology, the descendants of Adam inherit a tendency to evil which is primarily a tendency of *the will*. To the contrary, this would be to perpetuate Adam's fantasy. Instead, the *reality* of Adam's election is revealed primarily as loss of the vision of God and as physical death and incapacity of the body. As a result of this twin impairment, will as desire lacks both vision and capacity and degenerates into concupiscence: the original sin of Adam which we *do not*, as concupiscence, inherit, but through ignorance and weakness tend to *repeat*.

But then how, it might be asked, if the will is so inhibited, does St Paul think he can even *will* the good, although not carry it out? The answer is provided by Augustine in *De Libero Arbitrio*. Matching the aberrant leading role taken by the will at the Fall is the aberrant leading

role taken by the will under grace. The miracle of grace consists *precisely* in our capacity to desire truth beyond our intellectual and forceful inhibitions.[20] To be sure, for Augustine following Plato, all human knowing is an interplay between always-already knowing something and not yet knowing it, which amounts to the thesis that for us, fully knowing something is *always* in some measure the desire to know it. In this way, it has to be understood that, in Augustine, the vision which 'governs' the will, is nonetheless a vision only secured to a degree *through* right will. Moreover, since effective will must be enacted, a true and unimpaired potency is also essential for the enjoyment of vision (in the much later *De Trinitate*, such 'Trinitarian' equality of power, understanding and will is much more emphatically expressed) and yet a loss primarily of vision and impulsion (rather than will/desire) after the Fall implies the cessation or at least inhibition of the interplay between the already and the not yet of cognition. Just as, before the Fall, the lure of true vision pulled desire towards itself, so, now, after the Fall, the loss of vision weakens drastically the impulse of desire (while the loss of power equally impairs its capacity to express itself). Yet God does not restore our plight by proffering us primarily true vision and power once more; rather his new accommodation remains appropriately true to our finitely necessary interplay of already and not yet, by now *accentuating* the role of desire upon which such interplay depends. Hence what God, by grace, restores to us, in the face of the loss of the magnetic poles of the already of power and the not yet of fully attained knowledge, is precisely the 'middle' of interplay between them, the middle of desire which reintegrates their magnetism.

It will be seen from the above that it is not at all the case, for Augustine, as in post-Reformation misreadings of his work, that, after the Fall, human beings are left with a will to the good and to salvation which they cannot enact, thereby becoming aware of original sin, and an impotence that is only cured after the Incarnation.[21] To the contrary, Augustine affirms that the original justification assured to humans by divine grace before the Fall is seamlessly continued as the offer of redeeming grace through Christ which becomes immediately available by typological anticipation after the Fall.[22] In consequence, for Augustine (and he never retracted this) *no one*, after the Fall, is *guilty* on account of original sin; people are guilty only if they refuse the offer of grace and remain content with their deficient inheritance.[23] And this grace arrives precisely *as* our immediately renewed capacity

for a free willing of submission to God. Thus, if we experience original sin as the frustration of our will, then this is only because this will to fulfil the law is itself grace, and therefore, as James Alison has argued, original sin is only disclosed in the light of our salvation in Christ.[24] It is clear that in no way are grace and free will here set against each other in a Lutheran fashion. Instead, the gift of grace consists in a miraculously restored desire for God, despite the loss of original vision and capacity.

But if will operating properly as will is guided, for Augustine, by a true vision, how is it able to take the lead over vision in our restoration? How can purification of vision and capacity first of all be induced by a true desiring? To understand this, we have to understand the complex double hierarchy of will and virtue, which Augustine explains in the *De Libero Arbitrio*. He declares there that possessed intellectual and moral virtues lie hierarchically above the will, since virtue *as* virtue can only be good, while the will can be good or bad (meaning that the will can perversely inhibit itself). Nevertheless, he also asserts that the will wills a good *beyond* the good of virtue (beyond, therefore, one can note, the pagan conception of good).[25] What is this good beyond virtue? Augustine describes 'a virtue' as the possession of an individual, which *as* virtue he cannot lose, since virtue lost is vice. By contrast, the will desires, beyond virtue, an inaccessible divine good, which can never belong to an individual, and can only be enjoyed in common. This superabundant good is shared between us, and never possessed – just like sunlight, says Augustine, which is more truly precious than gold, even though gold can be held through private ownership. This good, since it is infinite and above us, and held securely by God, *can* be lost by us, unlike virtue as virtue. Nevertheless, insecure will, which should be guided by secure virtue, still takes the lead over virtue, because virtue is less fundamentally a possession than it is a sharing in the common good. Such sharing in what surpasses us is only ever to be attained by desire, even if a true desire, for Augustine, is also a kind of true, but inchoate, envisaging.

Moreover, if desire exceeds virtue in the direction of the more common and universal, then it also, according to *De Libero Arbitrio*, exceeds virtue in the direction of the more individual and particular. For the will is linked not just to discrimination of right from wrong, and the following of truth rather than falsehood, but also with idiosyncratic, but equally valid moral and aesthetic preferences. Thus, Augustine says,

some in a landscape will admire more the 'height of a mountain', others the 'verdure of a forest', others 'the pulsing tranquility of the sea'; and in like fashion the cleaving of desire to the good refracts it according to our specific local affinities.[26] In this way, the will for Augustine at once directs us beyond private virtue to the common good, and yet at the same time does so through a desire necessarily more individuated than virtues like patience, taken in the abstract, which though privately possessed, like gold, show, also like gold, the same identical quality in all instances. This is why 'will', in Augustine, names the drastic participatory tension between the infinitely general and the finitely particular. And it is clear that this tension has for him also a political dimension, because it implies the equipoise of the 'aristocracy' of virtue, with the 'democracy' of will and varied affinity. Thus, towards the end of Book I of *De Libero Arbitrio,* Augustine affirms clearly that theology requires a politics economically adapted to times and places: monarchy or aristocracy should be the norm where few are virtuous, and therefore the good is not much refracted; but democracy should be the norm where the good is widely (and we can infer, variously) distributed. This same tension indicates also an 'economic' dimension in every sense: enjoyment as common does not inhibit individual expression – rather each is the precondition of the other.

In this light, one can see that Adam's error was to deny this ontological tension which validates at once both individual expressiveness and collective sharing, in favour of a confinement to 'virtue' or to merely *private* possession of the nonetheless *abstractly general* (whose abstraction travesties the real superabundant infinite varied specificity of the true divine universal). His error was, by an act of will, to deny the aspect in which will is hierarchically superior to virtue, and instead to affirm only the one-sided hierarchy of virtue over the will, or desire. This is tantamount to denying the participatory aspect of virtue, and imagining that one can entirely possess, with absolute security, one's own virtue. Where the security of virtue depends upon oneself, however, this is simply because one wills virtue, entirely out of one's own volition, with a will poised, like the post-Kantian will, equally between good and evil. Self-possession of virtue, which ranks above will, because it can only be good, nonetheless entirely depends upon the self-possession of the will. Adam's error was to imagine that he could possess his own will. And the legacy of this error is that human beings think of the highest good, in stoic fashion, as that which can be self-possessed, and is not

subject to external erosion. The good is now thought of as the exercise of the most autonomous, which is free will.

By contrast, for Augustine, free will is only returned to us, as the arrival from outside of grace, and as the restoration of a good that we can only enjoy in common, and yet must receive according to our own unique affinities. To will, here, means to be moved beyond oneself towards a sharing and ontological distribution (according to real requirement, not formal equality) of the inexhaustible common good. It is through this moving that desire attracts once more to itself true vision, and draws along with it new resources of power for self-realisation.

D

Turning back now, to Kant, one finds instead an entirely different picture. He is not concerned with a lack of power to do good because, for him, this would be contradictory; 'ought implies can'. Nor is he concerned with a lack of guiding vision, because he has defined the good *as* a good will, or more precisely as the law which freedom gives itself, and which secures freedom. Because the good is primarily in this fashion law, it first of all concerns the form or manner in which things are done, and is indifferent as to content. To introduce some substantive good or aim towards such good into one's *primary* understanding of what is 'right' is, for Kant, actually to subvert morality.[27] 'Ends' are only admissible for Kant as a secondary consideration, and they concern first our willing of our perfect submission to the *formality* of duty, and second, our willing of the happiness of others, where 'happiness' means a mere empirical state, and *not* something inherently consequent upon virtue.[28] It is true that, owing to the conditions of our understanding, we cannot fully grasp the noumenally formal in itself as unmediated by the phenomenally substantive; but this ensures that freedom and its law remain for us an ineffable idea. Thus, both as formal and as ineffable, the Kantian 'right' which orientates the good, entirely exceeds all envisaging. And in no sense could radical evil for him connote loss of vision of the infinite, since the bounds between the finite and the infinite are permanently fixed and permit of no participatory mediation. For Kant, we will, adequately, as finite creatures with reference only to our finitude; at the same time, we do invoke a noumenal infinitude in which our spirits are truly at home; yet this infinitude only impinges on the finite as the empty and incomprehensible formality of freedom

which is inexplicably able to interrupt the fatedness of phenomenal causality.

Therefore Kant does not regard the will as bound by incapacity or blindness in the intellectualist and historical fashion of St Paul and Augustine – which is as biblical as it is Greek. To the contrary, he regards the will as self-bound, as mysteriously unable to will, or as willing against itself, pathologically. He is not concerned with a Pauline acting contrary to what one wills but with a habitual failure of the will itself to will freedom. This failure has, for Kant, two aspects. First of all, we tend to adopt non-moral maxims instead of moral ones: this means that where one's actions should embody in their most immediate meaning and palpability a maxim that we could will to turn into a universal law – for example the imperative to tell the truth – they tend, instead, to be contaminated by a pragmatic and egoistic concern for individual or collective material survival and well-being: hence we usually succumb to the temptation to lie.[29] Now it might seem that here Kant does, indeed, see freedom as trammelled by the flesh in the manner of St Paul. This is not the case, however, because, in the Pauline instance, as developed by Augustine, there is a certain continuity between the lower passions and the higher desire for God. (Were it not so, for St Paul, then sexual union with a prostitute would not be able to contaminate our collective bodily union with Christ.) Correctly orientated and disciplined, the lower passions should encourage and give way to the higher desire and, indeed, this mediation is essential such that, given corrupt passions, given corrupt *flesh*, no person can truly love God – and St Paul spilt much ink denying such a self-deluding dualistic illusion. For Kant, however, there is no such sphere of participatory mediation between the physical and the psychic. For him it is rather a given that the sensory is neither moral nor immoral but, instead, amoral and so naturally orientated towards self-preservation and self-enjoyment. In consequence morality is *not* for him primarily a matter of the reorientation of the feelings, or the passions: for him a necessary 'moral feeling' is the paradoxical feeling of 'the sublime' which is the feeling of a break with feeling, or the counter-attractive attraction of self-sacrifice.[30] This sublimity also mediates, by rupture and not by participation, between the sensory with its natural egotism and the noumenal or spiritual with its equally natural and inevitable upholding of the freedom of self along with the freedom of others. Given that we are free as noumenal, and that this freedom is both intellectually and competently sufficient unto

itself (as not for St Paul and Augustine) there is, in principle, absolutely no reason for it to be externally contaminated. Thus, in no way, as for the Greeks, the Church fathers and high scholastics, might sensory passions inevitably pull downwards the good will in Kant, unless entirely by its own perverse volition this will elects to substitute contingent for categorical ends.

In this way, Kantian 'radical evil' is a far more unsoundable mystery than Augustinian 'original sin' and a second aspect to our failure to will freedom redoubles the mystery. Here we do not adapt non-moral maxims but rather dilute our adoption of moral ones.[31] Kant avers that the dilution is always present, and even that the degree of such dilution is radically undecidable. This situation arises from the necessary role of 'moral feeling' in his account of morality. For, given that morality is the law of the noumenal, outside the bounds of our understanding which is confined to the noumenal, practical reason requires to be sensorily 'schematised' (or 'pictured' with an intrinsic appropriateness) and yet, unlike the categories of theoretical understanding, which are *orientated* to the phenomenal, it cannot, as reason, which is concerned with what lies beyond the phenomenal, be schematised in any truly legitimate sense.[32] Normally, Kant declares, it is improperly 'symbolised' according to a mere formal analogy, and schematised only at the curious point where we register, negatively, and yet still sensorily, a break with the phenomenal when it becomes sublimely infinitised. Such a break, Kant associates with heroism and self-sacrifice. Now in so far as these human phenomena belong with the natural sublime, they are not in any way for Kant necessarily moral: to the contrary, they concern our pride in, and awe at, a natural resistance to, and transcending of, nature. By contrast, Kant declares that the moral law in itself has nothing to do with sacrifice and admiration for sacrifice, which we tend to associate with the superogatory. Instead, the moral law commands only duty, and no one deserves admiration for fulfilling the minimum of duty; only disdain if they fail to do so.[33] And yet, according to Kant, we have *no* immediate access to this stringency and purity of duty – because for us the law of freedom is an essentially unknown idea which, indeed, we can affirm only through 'rational faith'; we are assured of freedom only at the point where we feel the attraction of giving up phenomenal well-being, or are led to admire such renunciation. Hence the moral law is only registered improperly as moral feeling, or the strange attraction of sacrifice.

This state of affairs, however, also drives the entire Kantian theory of

ethics into irresolvable aporias, as he half concedes. We are supposed to know the moral law a priori, without recourse even (as with theoretical reason) to the application of categories to sensible intuition. And yet, if the moral law is registered only through the schematisation of the natural sublime, then Kant is forced to supplement his case for the a priori status of the moral law, as he does in the *Critique of Judgment*, through illegitimate appeal to the admiration of all men in all ages for the heroism of sacrifice, as an inchoate registering of the categorical imperative. (The problem here being, why has something the most humanly vital and so democratically knowable by all, even the most theoretically stupid, namely the categorical imperative, only just been discovered – by Kant.)[34]

But then, of course, the problem ensues, how is one ever to know that sacrificial motives are pure? How is one sure that even a Thomas More died for the moral law, and not out of self-pride or the love of admiration?[35] And how is one to discriminate within oneself, if only a feeling of love of self-sacrifice registers the law, and yet *even this feeling* contaminates the purity of duty and is valid only insofar as this feeling constantly negates itself, sacrificing even the love of sacrifice? If this sacrifice even of sacrifice is still, nevertheless sacrifice, how to distinguish a diminution of love of sacrifice, and denial of self, from a subtle increase of love of sacrifice and affirmation of self?

This is the aporetic situation more or less admitted by Kant in *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone*. Here it is notable that some of the empirical instances he gives of 'radical evil' namely horrific slaughter in wars conducted for their own sakes, lie all too close to the instances of heroism practised for its own sake which he had earlier seen as evidence for the universal but inchoate registering of the categorical imperative.[36] The case, in Kantian terms, however, for regarding 'radical evil' as a priori, appears stronger than the case for the categorical imperative, since the a priori character of radical evil resides in the very undecidable uncertainty regarding human motivation as just described. If radical evil is more clearly a priori than the categorical imperative, then this implies, beyond Kant, that the reality of freedom itself, and its law, must remain uncertain (within the terms of a Kantian perspective).

As the self-binding of will, radical evil is a given fact precisely in the sense of an a priori. It is not, for Kant, like original sin, a biologically or socially inherited reality, because for him nothing in the causal order can affect the order of freedom. Nor, like original sin, is it a contingent

event which distorts the created order, and one can note here that original sin, by remaining with narrative and an endless regress, is really *less* hypostatic and ahistorical than radical evil. Instead, radical evil is a co-given along with freedom as an inherent possibility of freedom. This makes sense because, if what defines freedom is not its willing of an infinite goal which allows the flourishing of the free creature but rather the willing of freedom as such, then freedom can be free only if it might will against itself. For this reason, radical freedom is *implied by* enlightenment autonomy and does not qualify it – though only Kant was clever enough to see this. Pure freedom is as free in self-denial as in its self-affirmation. And we have further seen that actually, under these conditions, self-denial becomes indistinguishable from self-affirmation.

In point of fact, though, Kant does not admit the pure positivity of the evil will. He retains a minimal attachment to privation theory, by distinguishing *Wille* from *Wilkur* – however much the latter, acting will may elect the unfree, it can never entirely pervert the pure faculty of will which is orientated to its own freedom and not its own destruction.[37] Nevertheless, this Kantian distinction appears unstable, precisely because Kant regards evil as an original possibility constitutive of freedom as such. For Christian tradition, this was not the case: to the contrary, it regarded evil as the very *invention* of counter-possibility – of possibility in the drastic sense of an alternative to the actual. Therefore, by making such counter-possibility a surd dimension of the will, Kant lodges possibility within being as co-equal with actuality. In order for freedom to be actual, the capacity for self-destruction must lurk; in consequence, freedom appears more original than either actuality or possibility, indeed prior to being and non-being. It was this implication of radical evil which was developed by Schelling, and we can now see that the problem with his de-ontologisation and de-infinitisation of the good, is that thereby it inherits the Kantian problem of an undedicability between good and evil.[38] If God decides to share a neutral infinite with us, what renders this a gift rather than a kind of establishing of empire via a grant of being? How might the gift of being not be perhaps disguised domination, unless the infinite we are granted to share in is in itself unshakeable, as infinite peace and harmony according to a substantive aesthetic measure? Since peace and harmony and affinity make sense only as subjectively experienced and judged, there is really no danger that the ineluctable infinite good might be merely impersonal.

After Schelling, the God beyond God of a ground of freedom prior to good and evil is transmuted by Heidegger into the ontological identical with nothing and indifferent to the resolute ontic decision for actuality.[39] Indeed, the ground for the authentic autonomy of this decision which fully admits its contingency remains a preserving of the sense of the equal validity of cancelling such a decision: this preserving constitutes our necessary 'guilt' in the face of being. Jean-Luc Nancy rightly worries that both this ontic humanist affirmation and its reverse face of resignation to the indifference of fate – whereby the ontological can manifest itself only in occluding itself (as apologetically resorted to by the later Heidegger, at the end of the Nazi era) – are both complicit with the Holocaust.[40] And yet Heidegger is logical within the terms of the legacy of radical evil: to desire, like Nancy, that the will to affirmation have ontological priority, is, in effect, to reassert the vision of good as ontological and evil as privative. If Nancy were able to admit this, then he would also be able to admit that it is perverse to suggest that the extremity of modern evil reveals the co-primacy of evil in power and in being. For this renders all being and all power superior either to good or to evil, and therefore ensures that any act of power is legitimate and 'good' as undecidably good or evil. (Or to put it in another fashion: where good is not identical with being as such, willed good has only an 'ironic' fictional status – and in the end no one acts in the name of a fiction. This is one crucial reason why there *cannot* really be a secular privation theory: secularity will not see being as such as good and so will have to identify the good in terms other than full presence of the actual. The nearest one gets to such a secular theory is Spinoza – and later Nietzsche – but Spinoza still has an immanent God and being and power as good. Nonetheless, his immanentism means that evil in the cosmos, which is deficient weakness, is fated and inevitable: but in this way it would seem that evil does get lodged in being and privation is compromised, unless the perspectives of becoming have no true reality. One can conclude, therefore, that privation theory does require transcendence and creation *ex nihilo*.)

Where being is rendered as indifferent to good and evil, Auschwitz is falsely accorded the status of a revelation; in this way taking evil seriously by granting it positive status passes over into resignation to the sway of evil itself. In this way Hitler enjoys a ghostly theoretical victory.

E

It will be recalled that the main objection of the postmodern Kantians to privation theory was that it provides an ontological excuse for evil which diminished the responsibility of freedom. Now, however, it can be seen that this charge should be thrown back at them. For on their view, the decision for evil is referred to a prior possibility for such freedom – to a freedom prior to freedom indifferent to good and evil, which alone establishes freedom as freedom. The demonic breaking in of such a radical pre-personal freedom which is *prior* to decision (Schelling's 'dark ground') surely cannot be blamed on the person so possessed? This is once more an ontological excuse. Moreover, worse still, where one starts by asserting that the good has its ground in freedom *rather than* in being, one inevitably winds up by saying that being, as neither good nor evil, itself trumps freedom. Even if at first it allows it, it must in the end obliterate it, since without participatory mediation between a partially good finite, and an absolutely good infinite, the finite good will arises only through a concealment of being with which it is essentially in conflict.

By contrast, the privation theory avoids all excuses, by denying that evil is lodged in any reality, power or being whatsoever. Somehow, it is impossibly instigated by will alone. If it is true, as we have seen, that it is not really *caused* by freedom, since freedom, as free, causes only the good, then this shows that the bad will cannot *even* blame a possibility lodged within the order of causality (within which freedom, for the tradition, as not for Kant, itself lies). And as for the idea that finitude is an excuse, this may apply to the ancient Greeks but not to Augustine and Dionysius. For them, there is nothing defective in finitude as such, and nothing in finitude to encourage moral evil: rather what is defective is the disallowing of finite things from reaching their own proper finite share of perfection. (For Dionysius, it should be noted, privation is more the removal of the good than the removal of being, since the good for him lies beyond being; this detail does not really affect the present argument, however.)[41]

Thus, evil for the Christian tradition was radically without cause – indeed, it was not even self-caused but rather the (impossible) refusal of cause. Since inherited evil was held to have already impaired our finitude, there was, indeed, in us a causal bias to evil; yet, because grace renews our will, our evil decision to refuse grace is as groundless

and causeless as Adam's original sin. For this reason, according to Augustine, the origin of evil must be passed over as 'darkness and silence' as if there were a dreadful *apophasis* of evil that parodied the apophasis of the Divine.[42] Since evil is uncaused, there is, indeed, a sense in which it possesses us like an anti-cause proceeding from a satanic black hole (as J.-L. Marion argues – the non-existence of the Devil *is* the existence of the Devil).[43] But when it possesses us, not only are we responsible for this possession, it is also that this possession delivers the very phenomenon of autonomous responsibility. Evil is just that for which alone we are solely responsible. Evil is self-governing autonomy – evil *is* the Kantian good, the modern good.

Since evil is for privation theory so radically uncaused, it does not require to be justified by an ontodicy. Indeed, the rise of theodicy, and so of ontodicy, is much more correlated with a post-Scotist univocity of being, and a sense that, if the finite equally *is*, as much as the infinite, then even the lacking that is evil equally *is* along with the good: in consequence, the presence of evil must be 'justified' in terms of providential design.[44]

F

From such theodicy and ontodicy, the theory of radical evil is, in fact, by no means immune. If, for Kant, human good will is only evidenced in resistance to suffering, then certainly non-moral evil in nature plays for him a providential role. But, in addition, the most 'signal' virtue is for Kant displayed in our resistance to other human beings. Here moral evil, also, is a providential training ground for virtue, because Kant explicitly states that only the exercise of heroism in warfare (which, it will be recalled, is a sublime schema of the moral law) could have gradually trained up the strength of the will, such that it is finally able to resist its own self-denial, and to arrive at the moral preconditions for the establishing of 'perpetual peace' among the nations.[45] The passage to moral virtue via the sublime also traverses to exercise of radical evil, just as the path to civilised peace lies dialectically through warfare.

We have already seen, however, how this theodicy and ontodicy comes unstuck: the purportedly moral self-overcoming might still be the natural heroic will – at once sublime and radically evil, or one might well say, Miltonically satanic. How is one to decide? As Jacques Lacan pointed out, the Sadean sadistic will also wills only its own freedom,

and is also prepared to sacrifice comfort, security and survival for the sake of its own exercise.[46]

But Kant was near to conceding this problem. How did he try to cope with it? The answer is that he sought to supplement morality with grace. Supposedly, Kant brings religion within the bounds of reason by reducing it to morality but we have already seen how practical reason problematically transgresses the bounds established by theoretical reasons, since it claims knowledge of noumenal freedom. And we have also seen how, when moral knowledge is brought back within the schematic bounds of the phenomenal, our claim to know the noumenal as moral is rendered uncertain. Thus, practical reason, if it is to be saved, must on the grounds of its own rational demand, be *supplemented* by religious faith. *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* should really be entitled 'reason outside its own bounds in the sphere of religion'. For it turns out that ethics, the essence of religion, cannot after all dispense with the mere 'inessentials' or *parerga* of religion which exceed, for Kant, the ethical. Thus, it cannot dispense with unmerited grace, with the sacraments, with the organised Church.[47] Grace must be invoked because we can only distinguish the will to freedom from radical evil if we have faith that our aspiration to a good will is graciously taken by God as equivalent to his infinite and ineluctably Holy Will (here Kant clearly has not gone as far as Schelling). And to have this faith is also to have faith in an eschatological discrimination when the good wills will finally be divided from the bad wills, and the mere empirical pursuit of egoistic happiness will be finally subordinated to freedom since the virtuous will be rewarded with happiness and the vicious with unhappiness. Moreover, this faith cannot merely be entertained by individuals because radical evil arises for Kant (here influenced by Rousseau) only from cultural association which gives rise to envy and greed and so forth, and contaminates a supposed 'private' exercise of moral autonomy.[48] One can contrast Augustine here, for whom the good will is enjoyment, according to a specific refraction that is not in rivalry with other specific refractions, of an essentially common good. The only way, according to Kant, to combat this corruption of the inward by the social, is to set up, not merely a state founded on a social contract and directed by a general will but also a church which seeks really to overcome and not to inhibit the inner desires of egotism. A church is supposed, for Kant, to engender a kind of 'general moral will' and its sacraments, though arbitrary signs, are necessary

reminders of the hope of the eschaton, without which morality remains uncertain.[49]

And in this fashion, the theory of radical evil, which is supposed to locate evil within human limits, must after all, as Kant admits (though not his contemporary heirs) in order to avoid antinomianism, invoke divine grace. Kantian free will is not the Augustinian free will, however, identified with grace as the gift par excellence of grace. Instead, for Kant, freedom is no gift, but an inert *given*, and equally given along with it, is radical evil: so if it is a gift, it is a poisoned one. And as for Luther, free will as such cannot aspire to God; this Lutheran legacy is part of what leads Kant to conclude that finite will simply in itself is 'bound'.[50] Thus, bizarrely enough, Kantian grace is *far more* positivistically and pietistically irruptive than Augustinian or Thomist grace. For it does not give free will but juristically supplements its (ontologically) *given* deficiency since here the will to the good has reduced to the mere will to have a good will in the hope that God, by grace, will *impute* to us a good will.

If the Kantian account of grace and free will as it were parodies the Augustinian one, then so also does his account of the Church. For the Augustinian, as for the Pauline vision, the ecclesia aspires to and partially realises a real harmony of differentiated persons by blending together a diversity of characters and roles according to a beautiful and analogical affinity that is rooted in the Church's manifestation of the incarnate Logos. Kant seems almost to come near to this, and yet the diverse persons in his Church are only united under the abstract formal resemblance of their wills, and only aspire to be 'one body' according to a just matching of happiness to freedom. It is not that here the specific happiness which is also the specific freedom of one (within a scheme of teleological flourishing) is concretely blended with the specific free happiness of another, according to the advent of affinity under grace, as for the Pauline view which Augustine elaborated. (Not seeing this distinction, Arendt, like many others, overrates the anti-liberal potential of 'beautiful' reflexive judgement in the third critique.)[51]

And in this way it becomes apparent that radical evil does *not* offer a secular view of evil, but only an alternative theology which is an alternative account both of theological reason and of divine revelation to the traditional account provided by Christian privation theory. Now, then, we can attempt a theological discrimination between the two. And what is apparent is that, paradoxically, only privation theory (plus original sin and satanic possession) allow for a *human* discrimination of

good and evil in the here and now, and so the possibility of a substantively just social order. By contrast, the theology of radical evil is also a theology of radical eschatological postponement of a guaranteed good and a guaranteed justice. And this theology cannot really allow any *anticipation* of the eschaton.

G

It is finally the political implications of the Kantian legacy which I wish to explore. I have already defended at length the view of evil as privation which undergirds the view of evil as banal. The two views are not, however, identical: it is possible for negativity to take a sublime, quasi-heroic form. Nevertheless, one can extend Arendt's theory of banality by arguing that the political quasi-satanism of the perpetrators of state horror is usually prepared by an incremental piling up of small deficient preferences which gradually and 'accidentally' (as Aquinas argued) produce the monstrous. (Aquinas after Dionysius speaks of 'accidental' causing of evil, where Augustine seems to speak of no causing at all. By this, however, they mean that pursuit of a too limited good 'accidentally' causes the lack of good that should ensue. This is an odd sort of accidentality because it really brings nothing about and involves not merely a non-intended consequence but also an overlooked one.)

To give an example of this 'accidental' process: in the seventeenth-century colony of Virginia, female servants proved at once unruly and overdependent upon their masters in circumstances of instability and great reliance on women's labour.[52] It proved harder and harder to grant them relative independence after their apprenticeships, and also harder and harder to ensure the legitimacy of their offspring. Gradually, their servitude drifted into legal slavery, and inheritance for slaves was directed for obvious reasons of convenience through the female line (though the irrelevance of paternity also gave savage licence to rape and seduction by masters). Soon there were more black female servants and slaves than white. Soon after that, there were only black female slaves, and then their children, female and male, were all members of a black slave class. I exaggerate deliberately but one can see the point: there was no original satanic monster who intended initially to enslave black people because they were inferior but, in the end, there were such monsters with such intentions, retrospectively legitimating an appalling outcome which had resulted from inadequate, but scarcely

unambiguously malicious, intentions within the narrow light of their day.

Likewise with the Holocaust, the satanism of the final solution was the outcome of a long drift of deficient science, deficient philosophy, deficient politics and deficient sociality. To take the converse view, and to imagine that Hitler was a deliberate satanist or even that a Manson can attain a fully satanic perspective, is to lend credence to that saddest of all the errors of evil (and of Satan) whereby it always imagines that it is yet more evil than it really is. For evil to be at all, it must still deploy and invoke some good, yet it would like to forget this: evil as positive is evil's own fondest illusion. Insisting this way upon the pathos of evil and upon its creeping and incremental character by no means, as many fear, amounts to a taking away from the responsibility of individual wills. On the contrary, this insistence points to the gravity of even the smallest responsibilities; the dangers of apparently good intentions (which it does *not* quite deem as tragically unavoidable); also it does not excuse or regard as inevitable the long-encouraged emergence of 'monstrous' wills. Nor does this insistence tend to deny the unprecedented character of the Holocaust: all that it denies is the notion of a metaphysical revelation of an unexpected ontological status for evil. By contrast, it points to the Holocaust's real disclosure of the terrible capacities of an ancient depravity whose character, nonetheless, remains tediously as before.

But if the final solution was the outcome of a long incremental drift, then we must finally ask, was the Kantian legacy itself part of this process?

Hannah Arendt in part considered this to be the case. Albert Eichmann did, as she noted, have a self-admitted Kantian habit of mind insofar as he thought sovereign law must be obeyed; must be obeyed without exception; and must be obeyed beyond the call of duty in the spirit of the letter.[53] For Arendt, it is this popularised Kantianism which explains how the utterly inefficient Nazis were nonetheless able to co-opt the internalised efficiency of the German people.

Arendt, however, took Eichmann's Kantian habits to be a parody of Kantian nobility – and, indeed, it appears that Eichmann himself had thought so. Thus, she says that, for the ineffability of the sovereign law of free will as such, Eichmann had substituted the sovereign will of the Führer. This is not to be confused with the command of the categorical imperative. But is it not? And was Eichmann merely parodying?

Politics, for Kant, though rooted in the moral law, had to deal

mainly with the contingent, empirical imperatives of material well-being. We have seen, however, how the categorical imperative has to be schematised and symbolised in terms of these lesser imperatives. And the Kantian account of the just polity suggests indeed that the self-governing state symbolises the self-governing moral individual according to a formal analogy ('symbol' for Kant, always denotes a mere common ratio, which is also how he understands 'analogy'). This analogy involves nothing more nor less than *the division of power*. At the centre of the state should stand an unchanging sovereign power whose issuing of laws without enacting them renders it akin to the transcendent law of freedom in the individual. Kant himself makes this analogy when, in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, he compares God the Father, who is the ultimate source of the moral law, to a political sovereign.[54] God the Son is then compared to a political executive, and also to the individual will which is incited by moral feeling to obey the ineffable law. Thus, we see that, for Kant, the political executive is akin to individual moral activity, inspired by moral feeling. Finally, God the Holy Spirit is at once like the political judiciary and the individual judgement. These two are akin because they both seek to apply the law to particular circumstances, and to match freedom to happiness, according to extrinsic desert, not intrinsic co-belonging. In this way Kant, according to his logic of essential inessentials *(parerga*), reveals that his hierarchy of cold duty over warm feeling is grounded in a heterodox and Arian Trinity. At the same time, he reveals how the same Trinity secures a political sovereignty which can be taken as absolute and persisting over and above what is enacted and judged in its name.

To be absolutely fair to Kant here, he is clear that tyranny results when the powers are confused with each other and especially when the executive usurps the sovereignty.[55] By this measure Hitler would surely have been deemed a tyrant. Kant allows for the popular overthrow of a corrupt executive and judiciary, and this was the basis for his qualified support for the French Revolution. Nevertheless, in his famous footnote on regicide in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant ferociously disallows overthrow of the sovereign power as utterly contradictory.[56] So where sovereign and executive have coalesced, albeit through usurpation (as in the Nazi case) what Kantian basis remains to support resistance and non-obedience, even if the original usurpation was denounced, since the *de jure* basis of sovereignty in Kant seems to reduce to the de facto?

For Kant, sovereign political authority *is*, in fact, the point where moral and political rule, categorical and contingent imperative, actually come together. Since the sovereign power embodies the collective general will, and is the absolute source of all legality, to will against the sovereign power in person is to will against political legality. This cannot be universally willed, under the maxim 'I will to destroy a corrupt sovereign power' because it removes the very basis of legality, just as lying for Kant destroys the possibility of trust and thus of all free association. Hence regicide *does* fall foul of the categorical imperative, and to oppose the political sovereign *is* to oppose the moral sovereign. This conclusion really results because the ground of legitimacy in Kant is entirely one of immanent consent and procedural emission from a consensually established centre: thus he cannot allow that a substantive natural law would remain, even in the absence of sovereign power. To the contrary, the only political law of nature for Kant is that there must be an earthly sovereign centre if there is to be collective justice. Here the closed bounds of human reason which disallow a mediation of the infinite, also absolutise established human authority. This absolutisation is very extreme in Kant since he describes regicide as the *supreme* instance of radical evil and of sublime horror, almost displacing the crucifixion of the Son of God in this respect. Here the only thing that prevents regicide as an act of freedom from being seen as an act of moral liberation is the identification of the sovereign idea of freedom we must respect, with a *given*, established, specific exercise of freedom by a political ruler. But then how else, short of the eschaton, *are* we now to discriminate a good will from a bad one? Even though Kant never commits himself to this conclusion, it seems to follow if one thinks through his aporias to their ends. Kantian morality, deconstructed, says, you know your will is good when you obey the law of the state without exception and beyond the call of duty. Eichmann had it more right than he knew.

If this analysis is correct, then the Nazi episode casts suspicion not just upon Fichte or Muller or Nietzsche or Heidegger but on the main lines of the Germanic philosophical legacy to which the second half of the twentieth century has remained in some ways perhaps too dangerously subservient. This is not, however, to indict an entire culture, because Kant's most decisive and insightful opponents – Jacobi, Hermann, Herder – were also German and also strongly informed a later Germanic legacy. Moreover, in relation to the Nazis, many other currents are equally culpable, including an originally British

evolutionism in some of its manifestations.[57] But the ambiguity of the Kantian legacy does raise, specifically, the question which must still haunt us, of the collusion between liberalism and totalitarianism. Moral liberalism tends to engender an uneasy oscillation between absolute promotion of one's own freedom for any goal whatsoever, and absolute sacrifice to the freedom of the other, again without any conditions as to the goals that others should pursue. Writ large at the level of the state, this tends to produce a large-scale oscillation between a present collective identity as an end in itself, and the endless self-sacrifice of individuals for the sake of a better future. Thus, political liberalism itself engenders today an increasingly joyless and puritanical world in which we work harder and harder towards increasingly obscure ends while 'surplus' populations of the young, the old, the cultural misfits, the foreign and the poor are increasingly marginalised, disciplined, put to degrading work, or indeed simply destroyed. The liberal state already exhibits a certain totalitarian drift and may always become really totalitarian at the point where its empty heart is besieged by an irrational cult of race, class, science, style or belief.

This slide of liberalism towards totality confirms that where free will as such is identified with the good, the promotion of self-respect and autonomy will be simultaneously and indistinguishably the promotion of self-inhibition and radical evil. But for privation theory it is this very promotion of abstract free autonomy that itself enshrines what is evil, and radically deficient.

Notes

1 See Joan Copjec (ed.), *Radical Evil* (London: Verso, 1996); Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, trans. Bridget McDonald (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Slavoj Zizek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991). See also, to some extent, Jacques Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of "Religion" at the Limits of Reason Alone', in J. Derrida and G. Vattimo (eds), *Religion* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), pp. 1–79.

2 Immanuel Kant, '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', trans. George di Giovanni, appearing as a chapter in Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 57–213.

3 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin, 1992).

4 See Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996) and the introduction by J.V. Scott and J. C. Stark, 'Rediscovering Hannah Arendt'.
5 Arendt, *Eichmann*, p. 137.
6 See Michael Halberstramm, *Totalitarianism and the Modern Conception of Politics* (New Haven: Yale, 1999).
7 For a good account of this, see Roy F. Baumeister, *Evil: Inside Human Cruelty and Violence* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1997), esp. pp. 375–88.
8 See Jacob Rogozinski, 'Hell on Earth: Hannah Arendt in the Face of Hitler', in *Philosophy Today*, 37: 3/4, 1993, pp. 257–74, esp. p. 267.
9 Kant, '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', 6: 20–6: 53, pp. 69–97.
10 See Richard L. Rubinstein's classic text, *The Cunning of Reason: Mass Death and the American Future* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).
11 Dionysus the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*, Book 4, pp. 19–35, 716D–736B, esp. p. 31: 'it is not principles and powers which produce evil, but impotence and weakness'.
12 Dionysus, *The Divine Names*, Book 4, 20: 'Abolish the good and you will abolish being, life, desire, movement, everything'; Augustine, *City of Good*, XIV, II: 'The choice of the will . . . is genuinely free, only when it is not subservient to faults and sins'.
13 See Slavoj Zizek, 'Selfhood as Such is Spirit' in Copjec, ed., *Radical Evil*, pp. 1–30. In the same volume, see Jacob Rogozinski, 'It makes us wrong: Kant and Radical Evil', pp. 30–45. See also Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom,* chapter 12, 'Evil: Decision', pp. 121–41.
14 Both Paul Ricoeur and Pierre Watté interpret Kant as offering the finest interpretation of a Pauline 'Self-Inhibition', in a fashion that 'frees' the theme of liberty from cosmology, and discovers the seed of evil to be purely in the will taken as a *positive* assertion of self. The whole of this present essay is designed in part to demonstrate that such a view is historically false, pseudo-profound, and profoundly dangerous. Ricoeur also sees such positivity of evil as anticipated in primitive 'symbolisation' of evil as visible taint or disorder. This aspect of aesthetic disharmony, however, was rightly viewed by Dionysus as also privative: nothing that *appears* to us lacks beauty – rather what offends the eye is a deficiency of appropriate, requisite order that should pertain variously in any given instance. Thus, evil for him, while negative is also 'an inharmonious mingling of discordances': *Divine Names*, 4, 31. The invocation of an aesthetic aspect to privation does, nonetheless, serve to emphasise that evil as privation is not pure and simply nothing: as 'substance' it may be nothing, but in its effect of removal and deficiency it engenders a distorted positive act, even though, as positive, this act is not distorted. See Pierre Watté, *Structures, Philosophiques du Péché Originel: S. Augustin, S. Thomas, Kant* (Gembloux: J. Duculot S.A., 1974) and

the preface by Paul Ricoeur, esp. p. 8 and Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon, 1967), pp. 70–100.

15 At this point these thinkers are incorporating a Levinasian thematic.

16 See Zizek, 'Selfhood as Such is Spirit'. Also see F. W. J. Schelling, 'Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Related Matters', in *Philosophy of German Idealism*, ed. Ernest Behler (New York: Continuum, 1987) and F. W. J. Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, trans. J. Gutman (Chicago: Open Court, 1936).

17 See Watté, *Structures Philosophiques*, pp. 128–215.

18 Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), Book I, 1, 4, 12, 13, 25; Book II, 14, 16, 13, p. 57: 'This is our freedom when we are subject to the [infinite] truth.'

19 Augustine, *City of God*, XIV, 13; *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book I, 8.

20 Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book I, 11: once 'inordinate desire' has gripped the mind after Adam, it takes 'false things' for true, and becomes a prey to 'fear' and 'anxiety'. See further Book III, 3, 4, 18, p. 106: '. . . as it is [since the Fall] they [humans] are not good, and it is not in their power to be good, either because they do not see how they ought to be, or because they lack the power to be what they see they ought to be'; 'because of our ignorance we lack the free choice or the will to choose to act rightly'; 'or – even when we do see what is right and will to do it, we cannot do it because of the resistance of carnal habit'. Here Augustine is commenting on Romans 7: 18: 'To will the good is present to me, but I find no way to do it', and Galatians 5: 17, 'You do not do what you will, as flesh and spirit lust against each other.' Augustine continues, 'thus we who knew what was right but did not do it, lost the knowledge of what is right, and we who had the power but not the will to act rightly lost the power even when we have the will'. He then has to face the objection that if our free will is so inhibited by loss of vision and incapacity, then we are not to blame for failure to will the good. But he answers (p. 107), 'Perhaps their complaint would be justified if there were no victor over error and inordinate desire. But in fact there is one who is present everywhere and speaks in many ways through the creation that serves him as Lord. He calls out to those who have turned their backs on him, and instructs them who believe in him.' Desire of the good remains possible through grace, and so our lack of vision and incapacity are exceeded and potentially overcome (since the Pauline impotence, recognised *after* grace, is not really seen by Paul as an absolute check). See also Book II, 16, where it is made clear that the discernment of truth by will/desire is also the kenotic descent of divine wisdom towards us. At section 52 of *On the Spirit and the Letter* Augustine stresses that free will itself is the supreme gift of grace.

21 See Martin Luther, 'The Bondage of the Will', in *Martin Luther's Basic*

Theological Writings, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), pp. 178–9.

22 See note 20, above and the passage quoted from *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book III, 18, p. 107.

23 *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book III, 18, p. 107: 'You are not to blame for your unwilling ignorance [the legacy of Adam's sin], but because you fail to ask about what you do not know. You are not blamed because you do not bind up your own wounds [the post-Adamic incapacity], but because you spurn the one who wants to heal you. For no one is prevented from leaving behind the disadvantage of ignorance and seeking the advantage of knowledge, or from humbly confessing his weakness, so that God, whose help is effortless and unerring, will come to his assistance. When someone acts wrongly out of ignorance, or cannot do what he rightly wills to do, his actions are called sins because they have their origin in that first sin, which was committed by free will. The later sins are the just result of that first sin.' This shows that Augustine's account of original sin is objective, collective, historical and realist, and involves no contorted doctrines of subjectivity which concern an inevitable willing of the bad for which we are to blame. These rather descend to us from Luther and Kant.

24 James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong* (New York: Crossroad, 1998).

25 *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book II, 19.

26 *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book II, 9, p. 49. Augustine associates the common true/good with light, enjoyed by all sight at once, unlike a touchable object, which we can only touch one at a time, in turn. However, it seems to me implicit in Augustine that in the Eucharist 'sight' and 'touch' are fixed since here the most intimate touching of eating, is a simultaneous and collective eating of a body not 'used up', and not enjoyed exclusively 'one at a time' by eating. So here a body is like light and in this fashion the Eucharist supremely combines the most common and the most intimate. Therefore the Eucharist most exemplifies true writing or desire, and participation. Augustine in this dialogue also figures the dialectic of common and particular with the co-belonging of 'wisdom' with 'number'. Here he is not always easy to follow, but roughly it seems that 'number' is at times associated with the eternal divine ideas, and at other times with the diversity of the creation: as in God numbering sparrows and the hairs on our head. By contrast, wisdom is associated with the kenotic 'reach' of omnipotence to the ends of the earth, as with the figure of personified wisdom rushing to meet us, which Augustine alludes to. In this way the eternal numbers reach to the created numbers, and Augustine indicates that the diversity of instance and preference is not alien to the common, universal, eternal and measured.

27 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 183 [378], p. 193 [389]; *Critique of*

Practical Reason, trans. L. W. Beck (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), Part I, Book I, chapter I, II, pp. 65–8; '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', 6: 22, p. 72; 6: 24–6 :31, pp. 73–8.

28 This is why the 'revisionist' attempt to read Kant as a virtue ethicist cannot be rendered plausible.

29 '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', 6: 29, p. 77; *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), Preface vi–viii, p. 57 [389–90].

30 *Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 201–2 [400]; *Groundwork*, pp. 128–9 [460], *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. C. Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), Part I, § 4, pp. 46–8 § 6, p. 51; § 26 p. 103; § 29, p. 120.

31 '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', 6: 30, p. 77.

32 *Groundwork*, pp. 128–9 [460]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, Part I, Book I, chapter I, pp. 32–3, 43–52; chapter II, pp. 70–4; *Critique of Judgment*, Part I § 29, p. 121; § 30, p. 134; § 59, pp. 221–5.

33 *Groundwork*, p. 128 [460].

34 *Critique of Judgement*, Part I, § 29, pp. 112–13.

35 *Critique of Practical Reason*, Part II, pp. 161–3.

36 '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', 6: 33, p. 80.

37 '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', 6: 36, p. 82.

38 Schelling, *Of Human Freedom.*

39 See J.-L. Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, § 4, 'The Space Left Free by Heidegger', pp. 33–43.

40 Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, § 4. and 'Evil: Decision', pp. 121–41. Nancy also gives analyses of freedom highly compatible with Augustinianism, which describe it as that which 'surprises us, rather than as something we control, and as primordially 'sharing', since every free expression must 'give' something of oneself to others. See § 3 'Impossibility of the Question of Freedom: Fact and Right Indistinguishable', pp. 21–32.

41 For example, Dionysus, *The Divine Names*, Book 4, 26: 'there is no evil nature – rather evil lies in the inability of things to reach their *acme* of perfection'.

42 Augustine, *City of God*, XII, 7: 'To try to discover the causes of such defection . . . is like trying to see darkness or to hear silence.'

43 Jean-Luc Marion, 'Le Mal en Personne', in *Protégomenes à la Charité* (Paris: La Différance, 1986), pp. 11–43.

44 For Scotus and after, see Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 121–67. Privation theory plays little role within Leibniz's, *Theodicy.* See G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, ed. Austin Farrer (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985).

45 See, for example, Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book III, 15, pp. 100–1.

46 Jacques Lacan, 'Kant with Sade', trans. James Swenson, *October 51,* winter, 1989. See, for example, Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book III, 15, pp. 100–1; Slavoj Zizek, 'Why is Sade the Truth of Kant?'; Lacan in *For They Know Not What They Do*, pp. 229–41.
47 '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', Parts III and IV, pp. 129–215.
48 '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', 6: 94–5, pp. 129–30.
49 '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', 6: 151–6: 202, pp. 175–215 esp. 6: 153, p. 176.
50 Luther, 'The Bondage of the Will', pp. 178–9.
51 See Halberstramm's discussion of Arendt's use of the *Critique of Judgment* in *Totalitarianism.*
52 See Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
53 Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.
54 '*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*', 6: 139–43, pp. 165–8.
55 *Metaphysics of Morals*, Part II, section I, § 44–§ 48, pp. 123–8.
56 *Metaphysics of Morals*, Part II, section I, § 49, pp. 129–33, and Immanuel Kant, 'Perpetual Peace', in *Kant: Political Writings*, trans. A. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 124.
57 See the magnificent book by David Depew and Bruce H. Weber, *Darwinism Evolving: Systems Dynamics and the Genealogy of Natural Selection* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).